REMARKS

Claims 1-15 remain pending in this application. Claim 16 has been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter. Claims 1, 3, 4, 13, and 14 have been amended to define more clearly what Applicant regards as his invention. These changes are solely to clarify the claim language, and not to narrow the intended claim scope. Claim 16 has been added to assure Applicant of a full measure of protection of the scope to which he deems himself entitled. Claims 1, 13, and 14 are independent.

Claims 1, 2, and 6-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious from U.S. Patent 6,057,884 to Chen et al. in view of U.S. Patent 6,295,380 to Takahashi. Claims 3-5 were rejected as being obvious from Chen et al. and Takahashi, and further in view of U.S. Patent 5,774,548 to Bando et al.

Claim 1 is directed to a decoding apparatus including an input unit, a separation unit, a judgment unit, a control unit, an output unit, and a synthesis unit. The input unit is arranged to input a bitstream obtained by coding a plurality of object data in units of objects and multiplexing the coded data. The plurality of object data are data which provide a desired scalability in accordance with a combination among the plurality of object data. The separation unit separates coded data of each object from the bitstream, and the judgment unit judges permission of reproduction of the coded data by using intellectual property and management protection data included in the bitstream. The control unit performs reproduction-control according to a judgment result obtained by the judgment unit and the level of reproduction-permitted scalability. The outputting unit decodes the coded data of the object in accordance with the control unit, and outputs the decoded data. The synthesis unit is adapted to synthesize the output object data.

- 8 -

One notable feature of Claim 1 is judging permission of reproduction of coded data by using intellectual property and management protection data, and performing reproduction control according to the judged result and the level of reproduction-permitted scalability. By virtue of these features of Claim 1, the present invention can achieve not only the effect of controlling permission of reproduction (i.e., reproduction/non-reproduction) according to the judged result of the permission of reproduction and the level of reproduction-permitted scalability, but also the effect of being able to easily perform the multi-step reproduction control according to the permission of reproduction of the coded data. Thus, for example, with the apparatus of Claim 1 it is possible not only to perform reproduction control itself (i.e., whether or not to permit a user to view and listen to the coded data), but also easily to perform the multi-step reproduction control of a viewing and listening level (e.g., providing high-quality video) for the user.

Chen et al., as understood by Applicant, relates to temporal and spatial scaleable coding for video object planes. Even if Chen et al. is deemed to divide multiplexed coded data into enhancement layer data and base layer data and to decode and synthesize the divided data, nothing in Chen et al. would teach or suggest judging permission of reproduction of coded data by using intellectual property and management protection data and performing reproduction control according to the judged result and the level of reproduction-permitted scalability, as recited in Claim 1.

The Examiner concedes at page 3 of the Office Action that "Chen et al fails to disclose a judgment unit adapted to perform reproduction-control according to the permission of reproduction and the level of reproduction-permitted scalability, and a control unit adapted to perform reproduction-control according to the permission of

reproduction and the level of reproduction-permitted scalability judged in the judging

unit." The Examiner cites Takahashi as remedying the deficiencies of Chen et al.

Takahashi, as understood by Applicant, relates to an object data processing

apparatus for decoding N pieces of coded data (where N is a positive integer) obtained by

compressively coding N pieces of object data which constitute individual data to be

recorded or transmitted and have a hierarchical structure, for each object data. Even if

Takahashi is deemed to discuss that an object designation signal is input, and that a

designated object is selected from a multiplexed bit stream (see, e.g., Fig. 7), nothing in

Takahashi would teach or suggest the control of permission of reproduction (i.e.,

reproduction/non-reproduction) according to a judged result of the permission of

reproduction and the level of reproduction-permitted scalability, as recited in Claim 1.

Neither would anything in Takahashi teach or suggest the multi-step reproduction control

according to the permission of reproduction of the coded data.

Apparently the aim of Takahashi is that a user can select the desired object

easily and at high speed in the editing operation (e.g., see the Abstract). Accordingly, a

judgment of permission of reproduction and a reproduction control according to the judged

result of the permission of reproduction and a level of reproduction-permitted scalability

are essentially unnecessary to Takahashi. Moreover, the portion at column 6, lines 12-26

of Takahashi, cited by the Examiner at page 3 of the Office Action, is understood by

Applicant merely to discuss a hierarchical structure of the object and "priority" of the

decoding operation according to the processing power of the decoder. It is submitted that

such hierarchical structure and "priority" of Takahashi do not represent the "judged result

- 10 -

of the permission of reproduction" or the "level of reproduction-permitted scalability" as recited in Claim 1.

As explained above, nothing in Takahashi would teach or suggest a judgment of permission of reproduction of the coded data and a reproduction control according to the judged result of the permission of reproduction and the level of reproduction-permitted scalability, as recited in Claim 1. As such, Applicant submits that Takahashi cannot naturally achieve the above notable effect of Claim 1 that it is possible not only to perform the reproduction control of itself as to whether or not to permit a user to view and listen to the coded data, but also to easily perform the multi-step reproduction control of a viewing/listening level (e.g., providing high-quality video) for the user.

Accordingly, nothing in Chen et al. or Takahashi, whether considered either separately or in any permissible combination (if any) would teach or suggest judging permission of reproduction of coded data by using intellectual property and management protection data, and performing reproduction control according to the judged result and the level of reproduction-permitted scalability, as recited in Claim 1.

For at least the above reasons, Claim 1 is believed to be clearly allowable over Chen et al. or Takahashi, whether considered either separately or in any permissible combination (if any).

Independent Claims 13 and 14 are method and computer-readable storage medium claims, respectively, corresponding to apparatus Claim 1, and are believed to be patentable over Chen et al. and Takahashi for at least the same reasons as discussed above in connection with Claim 1.
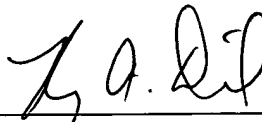
A review of the other art of record has failed to reveal anything which, in Applicant's opinion, would remedy the deficiencies of the art discussed above, as references against the independent claims herein. Those claims are therefore believed patentable over the art of record.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from Claim 1 discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

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